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ABSTRACT

The Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Project sought to determine the health education needs of this indigent population in Ohio using the help of lay outreach workers. A bilingual needs assessment survey was developed containing questions on demographics, place of permanent residence, points of travel after working in Ohio, and type of work and length of stay at each travel point after leaving Ohio. A second part asked farmworkers what they considered the most important health problem for farmworkers. They were also asked to choose topics of interest related to their health needs and to offer additional suggestions or comments. Individuals from five rural community-based organizations advised developers of the questionnaire, and lay outreach workers helped distribute and collect surveys during camp visits or during health fairs. Results from the 318 completed surveys (out of 500) indicate that the permanent residence of most migrant workers (67 percent) was Texas or Florida. Sixteen percent of those surveyed were seasonal farmworkers with permanent residence in Ohio. More than half of the workers were 26-45 years old. Perceived health problems in order of frequency were nutrition, alcoholism, stress, cigarette smoking, and drug abuse. Major topics of interest were alcohol and drug abuse, farm accident prevention, stress management, and domestic violence. The use of lay outreach workers proved an effective way of carrying out the survey. (KS)

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Lay Outreach Workers and the Ohio Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Health Education Needs Assessment

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The importance of trained community health advisors or 'promotores de salud' can be described as follows "Health needs assessment, outreach, and health education and health promotion interventions delivered by trained community health advisors, who are recruited from the community, have proven effective in promoting healthy behaviors and in reducing barriers of access to health care delivery systems for their fellow community members[1]."

The purpose of **The Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Project** was to determine the health education needs for this indigent population and to find out how valuable lay outreach workers may be when working with their own populations. A Migrant farmworker is an individual who performs farm work away (interstate or intrastate)from his/her usual place of residence. A Seasonal farmworker is an individual who performs farm work in the same area where he/she resides. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers in

Ohio number approximately 11,000 people during the peak farm period of March to November. They are employed throughout the

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period of March to November. They are employed throughout the state working on nursery and vegetable farms. Specifically, in Northeast Ohio a majority of the laborers are Puerto Rican and work in the nursery and grape industries; in Northwest and Southwest Ohio, Mexican American and other workers of Central American descent are employed to harvest tomatoes, pickles, cucumbers, strawberries, mushrooms and chilies. Because of logistical, language and cultural barriers, these workers frequently face significant obstacles to health services. The results of this study will guide future decisions regarding migrant health programs offered through the Ohio Department of Health's, Bureau of Health Promotion and Education.

The initial step, in the needs assessment process, was to develop a bilingual health education survey instrument. Basically, the core questions related to demographics, place of permanent residence, points of travel after working in Ohio, type of work and length of stay at each travel point after leaving Ohio. The second part of the survey asked farmworkers what they considered the number one health problem affecting themselves and their families. In addition, they were asked to choose one or more topics of interest related to their health needs, such as nutrition, physical activity, and injury prevention. Finally, they were encouraged to offer additional suggestions or comments.

on items that reflected their interests and needs in the camp.

During the development of the survey instrument, a group of lay outreach workers reviewed the questionnaire and provided valuable guidance on question construction and survey methodology. For example, one of the reviewers, Ms. Viola Gomez, a former migrant farmworker and member of a migrant household, offered specific suggestions on individuals to contact in each of the survey sites.

The survey was conducted with the cooperation of five individuals who represented rural community-based organizations. Each of these individuals received 100 questionnaires. Upon receipt of these questionnaires, they assisted with the distribution and subsequent collection of surveys by using their organizations' lay outreach workers. Surveys were distributed during camp visits or during health fairs. Farmworkers who needed assistance in reading and writing were provided with such. As a result, by August 25, 318 completed surveys had been collected.

Following is a summary analysis of the survey results:

Place of permanent residence for migrant workers:

Texas	43%	N = 136
Florida	24%	N = 76
Georgia	1.5%	N = 5
South Carolina	0.6%	N = 2

Place of permanent residence for *Seasonal Farmworkers:

*Ohio	16%	N = 50

The age frequency distribution of migrant and seasonal farmworkers surveyed.

Age distribution:

15 - 25	39%	N = 123
26 - 45	53%	N = 168
46 - 60	7%	N = 23
61 - over	1%	N = 4

The perceived number one health problem affecting farmworkers and their families was reported as follows:

Nutrition	27%	N = 86
Alcoholism	16%	N = 51
Stress	13%	N = 43
Cigarette Smoking	11%	N = 35
Drug Abuse	8%	N = 26

The major topics of interest in which farmworkers want more information were:

Alcohol and Drug Abuse	74%
Farm Accident Prevention	46%
Stress Management	46%
Domestic Violence	45%

The places of destination after leaving Ohio were:

Texas	117
Florida	107
Mexico	32
Michigan	9
Puerto Rico	8
South Carolina	7
Georgia	5
Guatemala	2
Alabama	1
Louisiana	1
New Jersey	1

In addition, farmworkers were asked what types of work or employment they would have after the farm season was finished in Ohio: 96 indíviduals expected to be unemployed, 149 individuals expected to continue doing farm work; the rest of the individuals expected to have odd jobs such as cashiers, clerks, housekeepers, babysitters, maintenance and construction workers.

The results of this survey have shown a number of health needs perceived by migrant and seasonal farmworkers such as nutrition, alcoholism, stress, cigarette smoking and drug abuse. The major

areas of interest to obtain information from were represented by alcohol and drug abuse, farm accident prevention, stress management and domestic violence. Results also suggest that using lay outreach workers is an effective way of distributing and collecting the surveys. Outreach education is a very important component of delivering linguistically and culturally appropriate messages. Lay outreach workers or "promotores de salud" (health promoters) understand and can relate to these communities because they share the language and culture of the individuals inthe camps. In some instances, health promoters are part of a camp and travel along with the group. These findings are consistent with those of other studies.[2, 3, 4]

As a result of this study, several recommendations are made: continue using lay health promoters who are able to approach and educate their own people because of their relationship to these communities. Information must be appropriate to the level of education of the community members. Minimum information should be given in writing, and if given in writing, it must be in Spanish.

For more information on this project, you may contact, Olga L. Alvarez, M.S., M.A, Health Education Specialist, Centers For Disease Control and Prevention-CDC, Mailstop K-46, Atlanta, GA, 30333, (404) 488-5439.

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3. Larson, K., McGuire, J., Watkins, E. and Mountain, K. 1992. J. Rural Health 8(2): 128-133.

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